

Y.M.C.A. Work Among the Soldiers

DOWN on the Mexican border, in a climate of great heat and discomfort, there has been concentrated an army of 140,000 men. More than 100,000 of this force are civilian soldiers now experiencing trying and unusual conditions for the first time.

When the call came to mobilize the young men of the big cities and the quiet country towns dropped their work and their sport, turned their backs on home comforts and entrained for their camps. From there, quickly whipped into shape, they were hurried to the border.

The pulses of the crowds stirred as the



M. W. Lee,
Secretary in charge of Virginia Y. M. C. A. at Brownsville.

Facts culled from a recent letter from Mr. Lee indicate how the work is being done in the Virginia Camp by the Y. M. C. A.:

Five hundred men have signed up for Bible study.

We have a personal workers' band in each company of the Second Regiment, and in three companies of the First.

There have been eight hundred forward step and Christian life decisions up to date.

The night school has over 35 enrollment, with six teachers.

Attendance on religious and educational meetings are from 800 to 1,000, including 100 to 200 who frequently stand on the outside looking in and hearing.

More than thirty men have been won to the Christian life by the secretary in personal work.

troops marched from their armories to the trains that took them away. The soldiers felt the thrill and pride of their calling.

Hard Fighting Without War.

Now, far away from home and friends, these volunteers in the nation's cause are putting in twenty-four hours a day of the dull routine of camp life.

Fortunately, so far there has been no war between men, but our soldiers are fighting the heat and dust and mud, drilling and working in camp or scattered along the Mexican border miles from the railroad—a thin khaki line doing lonely outpost duty in the mesquite, cactus and sand, alternated with long hours of nothing to do.

The government has provided amply of good stout clothing, substantial soldierly food and good camp equipment. For the rest, these sons and brothers and friends

of people at home are thrown on their own resources.

Response of the Army Y. M. C. A.

When the call for the troops went out the Army Y. M. C. A., knowing it was needed, promptly responded and assembled its forces and facilities. In a few weeks it erected, equipped and manned branch association buildings in every camp along the Rio Grande and on the Mexican border line, from Brownsville on the Gulf to San Diego on the Pacific.

These buildings are large frame structures—the shadiest and coolest places in the hot camps and at night the best lighted and the most cheerful. They are veritable club houses for the soldiers. Every day and evening men visit the buildings by thousands.

Here are provided reading and writing rooms, with good books, plenty of magazines, writing paper and games. A sign in each building reads: "Write Home," and thousands of the soldier boys do it. At one building 6,000 sheets of writing paper were given out in one day.

Forty tons of magazines and other reading matter were sent to the association buildings on the border between July 1st and September 1st, and there were many individual shipments from soldiers' relatives and friends. When the soldiers are not writing letters or listening to the graphophone, they are reading. Domino and checker tournaments are going all the time with full entries. If the quoits are all in use, any Y. M. C. A. secretary can produce horseshoes as a good substitute.

Assailed by Grave Dangers.

Aside from the routine work and drill the social life of the troops is pitifully thin and monotonous. These young men

men parasites who profit on the loneliness of the soldiers, their longing for entertainment. Hardly were the troops established in their camps when they were assailed by all the loose temptations that designing people could throw in their way. Saloons, gambling hells, and worse places are housed in shacks or adobe houses, striving for the soldiers' money and willing to ruin them morally and physically.

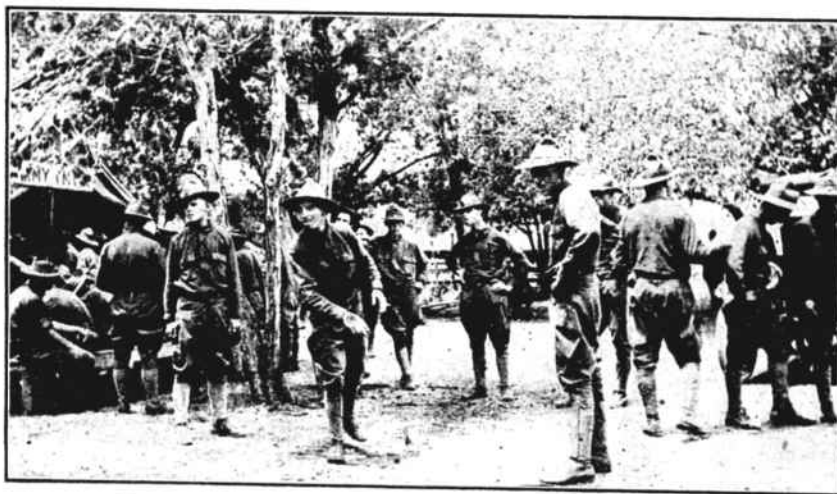
Counter Attractions Provided.

In the Y. M. C. A. buildings lectures, talking machine concerts and movies are some of the counter attractions which offset the saloons, the gambling dens and dives.

A program of helpful religious meetings is conducted and a folding organ leads the old hymns which everyone can sing.

A never-failing barrel of ice water is on tap—ever welcome in the awful heat.

Each association is a center of good moral influence in the camp. They are in charge of broad-minded, strong-hearted, whole-souled secretaries, who are ready at all times to lend a hand or lighten the burden of their friends in khaki.



Recreation While Off Duty—A Game of "Horseshoes."

have been used to the diversion of their work, the city streets and shops, the eating places, the recreation of the beaches, the parks and country places, of music, reading or the neighborhood movies.

In the lack of these diversions—lies a great danger. An army always attracts swarms of camp followers—men and wo-

Meets Approval of the Army Officers.

General Funston speaks in complimentary terms of the efficiency of the Y. M. C. A. work on the border. Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, says: "From every observer I heard commendations of the most enthusiastic sort for the work which the Y. M. C. A. is doing on the border."

"I am both filled with admiration and gratitude for the sanity and enthusiasm with which your secretaries have entered into this important work."

An army chaplain said: "The association has helped more than anything else to hold the well disposed men to their ideals and I believe there is not a man in the regiment who has not felt its restraining influence."

A lieutenant-colonel remarked to a secretary, "Another officer and myself went by your building last night. We remarked to one another what a wonderful change had come over our men since you Y. M. C. A. people opened your building. You are filling a big place in our camp. The men were so uneasy before you came."



How the Men Attend Entertainment.

What the Men Think of

"You fellows are certainly doing a wonderful work. Everywhere I see the results of the good you are doing."

"My, this is some place you have out here for us. We never had an opportunity to write out home like this."

"The Y. M. C. A. is like the everywhere."

"This little Y. M. C. A. did more work during the storm than I saw, big or little."

"Never had such a privilege before."

"I have belonged to a Y. M. C. A. I was 12 years old, but never would do such a work for us as this."

"When I get back to — at — Street about the Y. M. C. A. what I think of it."

"This Y. M. C. A. saved me. I was sick, lying in the mud and mud night of the storm. A friend brought me here."

"The Y. M. C. A. is surely doing a great work. I don't know what we would do without the Y. M. C. A. down here."

"The association is doing a work no one else could do."

One young fellow told me the Y. M. C. A. in his camp was helping him keep straight. The Y. M. C. A. kept him from going down street for recreation.

A fellow in the Illinois camp told me the other day: "Thank God, somebody is thinking of us down here. Of course his expression was strong, but he really thought, but he approved."



Writing Letters at Y. M. C. A. Tent While on Hike.



Army Y. M. C. A. Building, Virginia.